EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030
targets for protected areas & for status improvement of protected species and habitats

Butterflies and EU Biodiversity Strategy targets
Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process networking event (online), 29-30 March 2022

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The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

- Strategy adopted by the European Commission on 20th May 2020
  https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380

- Overall goal: **to put biodiversity on the path to recovery** by 2030, by protecting and restoring nature and ecosystems in the EU

- **Headline targets:**

  1. *Establish a larger **coherent EU-wide network of protected areas***
  2. *Develop a **EU Nature Restoration Plan***

- the Strategy was **endorsed by Member States** through Council Conclusions in October 2020, and by the **European Parliament** in an own-initiative report adopted in June 2021

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Protected area targets *in the Biodiversity Strategy:*

A larger and coherent EU-wide network of protected areas:

- **Legal protection** for at least
  - 30 % of EU land/freshwater area
  - 30 % of EU sea area

  Strict protection for at least
  - 10 % of EU land/freshwater area
  - 10 % of EU sea area

- By 2030, all **protected areas** should:
  - have clearly defined conservation objectives and measures
  - be effectively managed
  - be appropriately monitored

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Commission Guidance note *(28 January 2022)*

o The target for 30% of legally protected areas shall include:

  ▪ Natura 2000 sites

  ▪ Existing protected areas under national schemes

  ▪ new protected areas still to be designated

o The network shall integrate ecological corridors

  ▪ ensure connectivity & prevent genetic isolation, allow species migration, maintain an enhance healthy ecosystems

o OECMs & urban green areas should be considered

o Restored areas should also be included

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Strict protection

- strictly protected areas need to be legally protected (as such)

- **these areas should include**
  - all old-growth and primary forests
  - other carbon-rich ecosystems, such as peatlands and grasslands
  - other ecosystems that require strict protection

- **natural processes** are left essentially **undisturbed** → not necessarily incompatible with some human activities

- both *non-intervention areas* and *areas for which active management is required (!)* **to achieve the conservation outcome**

- **functionally meaningful areas** → sufficient size on their own or together with buffer zones

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Limit between protection and strict protection?

Protection (30% target)

Conservation objectives often less ambitious than maximum ecological site potential

Management may reflect a compromise with objectives other than biodiversity-related ones

Other extractive activities may occur

Strict protection (10% target)

Conservation objectives ambitious and based on maximum ecological site potential

Management activities limited to those necessary for the restoration/conservation of habitats and species for which the site is designated.

Extractive activities only if needed to achieve conservation objectives

➔ " Mowing or grazing of grasslands would be considered compatible with strict protection if it is limited to the intensity needed for optimising the conservation value of the grasslands in question. "

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How to achieve the protected area target ?

- Identify and designate **additional protected areas**:

    1. complete any remaining gaps in the Natura 2000 network (N.B. most relevant for marine species and habitats)

    2. identify species and habitats that require additional areas to be protected (first at EU level, then at national or regional level)

        - Species/habitats protected under EU Nature legislation

        - Other species/habitats that require better protection (Red listed, etc.) !

    3. select the most suitable areas to be designated for the protection of those species and habitats (as new areas or site extensions)

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The mechanism

1. **Initial pledges** for new areas to be designated should be submitted by MS to the Commission

   - explain
     - **criteria used** for the identification
     - **scientific evidence** that is being used for the designation

2. **Discussion** of the MS's **pledges within the framework of the biogeographical meetings**

   - focus on both
     - natural values of individual sites to be designated
     - global coherence and completeness of the network

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Effective management of protected areas

Establish and implement **appropriate conservation objectives and measures:**

1. ensure non-deterioration

2. define clear and quantified conservation objectives and clear conservation measures to achieve them

3. include monitoring as it is crucial for an effective protection

4. measure management effectiveness

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Format for the national pledges

The format for the pledges on the protected areas targets includes the following main sections:

1) Member State-level information

2) Information on existing protected areas and OECMs, to establish a clear baseline

3) Pledges for future designations as protected areas or recognition as OECMs

Subsequent reporting of protected areas through the CDDA (*Common Database of Designated Areas*)

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The "30% status improvement target" in the EU Biodiversity Strategy:

« *The Commission will request and support Member States to **raise the level of implementation of existing legislation** within clear deadlines.*

*It will in particular request Member States to **ensure no deterioration in conservation trends and status of all protected habitats and species by 2030**.*

*In addition, Member States will have to ensure that **at least 30% of species and habitats not currently in favourable status** are in that category or show a strong positive trend.*

*The Commission and the European Environmental Agency will provide **guidance to Member States in 2020 on how to select and prioritise species and habitats**.* »

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Key features of the target

- designed to **speed up the implementation** of EU Birds and Habitats Directives

- **national-level target** that each Member State should individually achieve
  (this is hopefully improving national ownership + triggering "positive competition")

- **aligned with the reporting** on status and trends of species and habitats under
  Art.17 Habitats Directive and Art.12 Birds Directive

- **no breakdown** of the target **below national level** (ex. species vs. habitats,
  biogeographical regions, terrestrial vs. marine, etc.)

- although primarily focussed on the national level, achieving the target may
  require **trans-national coordination** (in particular for mobile/migratory species)

- **not a legally binding target**, but endorsed by Council conclusions

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Commission Guidance note (June 2021)

Guidance note provides clarification on the target and proposes criteria for prioritization of habitats and species, based on:

1. Biodiversity-related criteria
   - Habitats/species with highest risk of extinction
   - "national responsibility"
   - "umbrella effect" on other species and habitats

2. Synergies with other EU policies
   - Climate change adaptation / mitigation (restore carbon-rich ecosystems)
   - Synergies with other restoration targets in the Strategy, etc.

3. Prioritising "easy" targets, to be able to show successes

➔ These **criteria are indicative** and aimed to help Member States fulfilling their political commitment expressed in the Council conclusions, where they welcomed the EU Nature Restoration Plan under the EU Biodiversity Strategy

Setting the baseline

1. **National biogeographical region-level conservation status assessments** (HD Art. 17 report of 2019): all habitats and species reported as present + <u>not</u> assessed as FV (favourable conservation status)

   ➔ National biogeographical region assessments for species or habitats present in more than one region in a Member State count as separate units for the baseline

2. Bird species reported at national level (BD Article 12 report of 2019) + <u>not</u> assessed as "secure" in the **EU-Level population assessment**

   ➔ Commission Guidance suggest to focus on **breeding populations**

   ➔ Member States can decide to extend the list of birds, by including additional species/sub-species considered in bad status at national level (national red lists, etc.)

➔ **to meet the target by 2030, there should be no more deteriorating trends for any species or habitat assessment; and positive trends for at least 30% of all assessments not already assessed as "favourable" in the report of 2019**

Format for pledges

Provide a list of habitats and species **that should (at least) show a strong positive trend by 2030 (or even better: achieve FCS)**

- an explanation on the criteria used for selecting these habitats and species
- an explanation on the measures needed to achieve the desired positive trends by 2030

Provide additional list of habitats and species for which additional measures should be taken **to achieve non-deterioration by 2030**

- an explanation on the measures needed to achieve non-deteriorating trends by 2030

Provide a list of habitats and species for which deterioration is expected not to be halted, despite all possible measures taken.

- an explanation on the reasons why deterioration cannot be halted by 2030

A description of measures that will be taken to improve the quality of monitoring and reduce the share of "unknown assessments"

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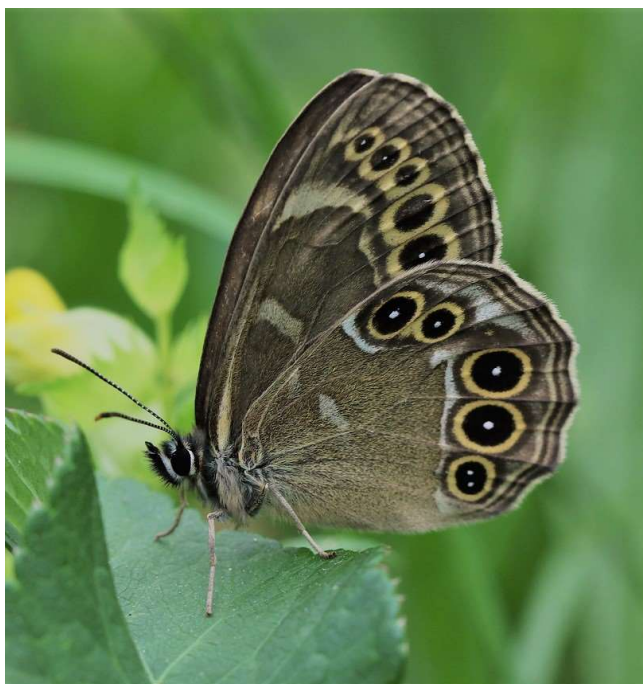# *Description of measures in the pledge format*

- List all foreseen measures per species or habitat; for each measure **provide quantitative and qualitative information that would allow assessing that what is foreseen is suitable to achieve the desired outcome**

- Provide an **indicative timeline** for these measures

- Explain **why the envisaged measures are considered sufficient** to either achieve non-deterioration or a strong positive trend by 2030

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Examples of national priorities for non-deterioration or recovery of butterfly species

Woodland Brown *(Lopinga achine)*
Reported **U1 - / U2 -** in 9 and **U x / XX x** in 12 national biogeographical region assessments (21 out of 29)

Danube clouded yellow *(Colias myrmidone)*
Reported **U2 -** in 5 and **U2 x / XX x** in 4 national biogeographical region assessments (9 out of 10)

Violet Copper *(Lycaena helle)*
Reported **U1 - / U2 -** in 7 **and U1 x / U2 x** in 6 national biogeographical region assessments (13 out of 14)

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Next steps (for both targets !)

Commission and EEA:

1. Development of electronic "reporting formats" for pledges (mid 2022)

2. In line with the format, development of dashboards to publicise the pledges received (late 2022)

National authorities:

1. Development of pledges (in the course of 2022)

2. Submission of pledges (end 2022)

Commission, EEA, national authorities & stakeholders:

1. Review of the pledges in the frame of Biogeographical seminars (early 2023)

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Thank you for your attention !